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# The Prophecy of Daniel 8

***The Atheistic Naturalist's  
Self Contradiction***

***A Great Book for  
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Bust of Alexander the Great

# The Prophecy of DANIEL

# 8

Kyle Butt, M.A.

One extremely valuable line of evidence that confirms that the Bible is the inspired Word of God is the presence of accurate, predictive prophecy contained in its pages. Not only are the prophecies of the Bible fulfilled in minute detail with complete accuracy, but these fulfillments are often accomplished centuries after the prophecies were made. Even the skeptic understands that if this is the case, a supernatural agent must be responsible for the writing of the Bible. That is why the skeptic attempts to discredit the prophecies by claiming that they were written after the events, or by claiming that they were not fulfilled in detail. By attempting to disparage the prophecies using these methods, the skeptic admits that if the prophecies were written centuries before the events, and if they are fulfilled in detail, then a supernatural agent is responsible for them. As the prophet Jeremiah wrote: “As for the prophet who prophecies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent” (28:9). Completely accurate, fulfilled prophecy is a characteristic that verifies the divine inspiration of the Bible.

In truth, a multitude of accurate, predictive prophecies fill the pages of the Bible. This article will deal with only one, which is found in Daniel chapter 8. In that passage, the prophet Daniel

relates to his readers the following prophetic vision:

In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me—to me, Daniel—after the one that appeared to me the first time. I saw in the vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I was in Shushan, the citadel, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision that I was by the River Ulai. Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great. And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power. And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand. Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it

four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land. And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered. Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, “How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?” And he said to me, “For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed” (Daniel 8:1-14).

After narrating what he saw in the vision, Daniel wondered what the dream meant. While in this state of contemplation, the angel Gabriel approached Daniel to explain the dream. Gabriel proceeded to offer an accurate interpretation of the events that Daniel saw:

The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia. And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people. Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; and he shall exalt himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince



of princes; but he shall be broken without human means. And the vision of the evenings and mornings which was told is true; therefore seal up the vision, for it refers to many days in the future (Daniel 8:20-26).

## THE TIME OF THIS PROPHECY

In order to understand the significance of this prophecy, it is important to settle the date when the prophecy purports to be written. The author claims to be writing the prophecy in the “third year of the reign of King Belshazzar.” A look at secular, historical records gives us a solid understanding of this date. Nabonidus was the king of Babylon and father of Belshazzar. In the ancient historical inscription known as *The Verse Account of Nabonidus*, we read, that when “the third year was about to begin—He [Nabonidus] entrusted the ‘Camp’ to his oldest (son), the firstborn, the troops everywhere in the country he ordered under his command. He let everything go, entrusted the kingship to him” (Pritchard, 1969, p. 313). A different ancient inscription known as the Nabonidus Cylinder explains that his firstborn son was Belshazzar (“The Nabonidus Cylinder...,” n.d.). He was entrusted with the army in the third year of Nabonidus’ reign, which most scholars agree was around the year 553 B.C. So the third year of his reign, in which the prophecy of Daniel 8 was delivered, was approximately 550 B.C.

## THE KINGS OF MEDIA AND PERSIA

Daniel saw a ram with two notable horns, one being higher than the other. This ram was pushing westward, northward, and southward, and became great. The angel Gabriel explained that this ram with two horns signified the kings of Media and Persia. When we look into history, we see that the description of their activities matches what we know from secular historical accounts. The Median Empire had been growing in strength for many years. Historian J.M. Cook noted, “By the middle of the seventh century [B.C.—KB] things were running for the Medes” (1983, p. 3).

Famed Greek historian Herodotus, writing in the 5th century B.C., describes the formation of the Median Empire in which the Medes had numerous smaller settlements that were united by a man named Deioces. This man built a large capital city known as Ecbatana. According to the historian, he reigned for 53 years and united at least six regional groups into the kingdom of Media. Herodotus then documents that Deioces’ son Phraortes reigned for 22 years after his father. He was succeeded by his son Cyaxares, who “united all Asia beyond the Halys under his rule” (1996, 1:95-103). Cyaxares reigned 40 years, died, and was succeeded by his son Astyagas. Under the reign of Astyagas, the Persians revolted against the Medes. Led by Cyrus the Great, the Persian army defeated Astyagas’ army, and Cyrus ascended to the throne of both the Medes and the Persians (1:127-130). The *Nabonidus Chronicle* confirms Cyrus’ victory against Astyagas (*The Nabonidus Chronicle*, n.d.).

One interesting point as it relates to the prophetic vision of Daniel is the fact that initially, the Medes were the superior, ruling class. This information comes from numerous statements found in Herodotus. For instance, Astyagas

married his daughter to “a Persian named Cambyses, a man he knew to be of good family and quiet habits—though he considered him much below a Mede even of middle rank” (1:107). When Cyrus took control of the empire, however, the Persian facet of the kingdom grew to be stronger, even though it was the second to rise. Herodotus wrote: “On the present occasion the Persians under Cyrus rose against the Medes and from then onwards were masters of Asia” (1:130). This historical fact coincides perfectly with Daniel’s vision in which the first ram had two horns “but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last.”

The dual power of the Medo-Persian Empire, led first by Cyrus and then by his son Cambyses, continued to grow in strength and territory. Herodotus documents that the empire stretched across all Asia. Cyrus then began to “push westward,” subjugating peoples such as the Ionians as far westward as the Aegean Sea (1:169). The historian notes that Cyrus was possessed of “restless ambition” and engaged in “successive acts of aggression against one nation after another” (1:190). Cambyses, who reigned over the empire after his father, seemed to have the same ambitious spirit.

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He “pushed southward,” conquering nations as far south as Egypt (3:1-27). Darius, who assumed the throne after Cambyes, claimed to rule over a host of nations, including areas as far north as Armenia (*The Behistun Inscription*, n.d.). Thus, there can be no doubt that the ram with two horns signified the Medo-Persian Empire, exactly as the angel Gabriel stated.

### THE MALE GOAT FROM THE WEST: ALEXANDER THE GREAT

In Daniel’s vision, the ram with two horns, which was the Medo-Persian Empire, was defeated by a male goat that arose out of the west and had a notable horn in the center of its head. In his explanation of the vision, Gabriel said that this male goat was the kingdom of Greece, and the notable horn was the “first king.” Anyone familiar with ancient history recognizes this first king as Alexander the Great, the son of Philip of Macedon. Alexander was arguably the most successful military commander in the history of the world. First-century A.D. Roman historian Quintus Curtius Rufus stated that Alexander had “a lust for glory and fame reaching a degree which exceeded due proportion” (2001, 10:29). His conquest of the world was so thorough, that Rufus suggested that Fortune had shown her face on him with such delight that it was to Fortune he owed the most gratitude. In fact, Rufus stated: “The fates waited for him to complete the subjection of the East and reach the Ocean, achieving everything of which a mortal was capable” (10:36). In the course of his conquest, he defeated the Medo-Persian Empire and assimilated it into the Greek Empire. Rufus documented the various battles Alexander fought with king Darius, the ruler of the Persian armies, and the Greek’s victory over the opposing Medo-Persian Empire (Books 3 and 4).

### THE FOUR NOTABLE HORNS: RULERS AFTER ALEXANDER

Quintus Curtius Rufus noted that upon Alexander’s death, since he

lacked a definite heir, various individuals would most likely make a bid for the throne (10:12). Amidst the scramble for Alexander’s throne, his kingdom was divided into four segments: “[T]he Macedonian Empire split into four main kingdoms—the one of Seleucus (Asia), Ptolemy (Egypt), Lysimachus (Thrace), and Antipater’s son Cassander (Macedonia, including Greece)” (“Alexander the Great Biography,” 2003).

Plutarch, the ancient historian, documented this division in great detail. In his exposition on Demetrius, he wrote:

The followers of Ptolemy in Egypt on their part...gave him the title of king. And thus their emulation carried the practice among other successors of Alexander. For Lysimachus began to wear the diadem, and Seleucus also in his interviews with the Greeks.... Cassander, however, although the others gave him the royal title in their letters and addresses, wrote his letters in his own untitled name (1920, 18).

Diodorus Siculus confirmed this account in Book 19 of his work when he wrote: “When they had been brought into the council, they demanded that Cappadocia and Lycia be given to Cassander, Hellespontine Phrygia to Lysimachus, all Syria to Ptolemy and Babylonia to Seleucus” (1947, 19:57). Both writers mention that Antigonus and his son Demetrius fought for control of portions of the empire as well, but upon their defeat, Plutarch wrote: “The victorious kings carved up the entire domain which had been subject to Antigonus and Demetrius, as if it had been a great carcass, and took each his portion, adding thus to the provinces which the victors already had” (1920, 30).

Thus, over 250 years after Daniel’s vision in the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar, Alexander’s kingdom was divided and ruled by “four notable horns.” As the prophet Gabriel had predicted concerning the kingdom of Greece in Daniel 8:22, “four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power.” Secular history perfectly confirms the accuracy of this statement.

### ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES IV: THE LITTLE HORN

In Daniel’s vision, a little horn came out of one of the four notable horns (kingdoms) and grew to be great. This horn spread his authority toward the south, east, and the “Glorious land.” He exalted himself as high as the “Prince of the host,” and took away the daily sacrifices. Gabriel stated that this horn represented a king who would “understand sinister schemes,” “magnify himself,” and “be broken without human hand.” Does history record the life of an individual who fits this prophecy? It certainly does. Out of the Seleucid Empire arose a king named Antiochus Epiphanes IV. His reign began in 175 B.C. and lasted until 164 B.C. It was characterized by tyranny, deceit, and brutality, just as Daniel’s vision predicted and Gabriel confirmed. A brief look into the specifics of these prophecies verifies Antiochus Epiphanes IV’s presence predicted in them.

#### “Exalted Himself as High as the Prince of the Host”

The little horn of Daniel’s vision was predicted to be so enamored with his own importance that the text states, “He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host” (Daniel 8:11). The angel Gabriel explained that he would “magnify himself in his heart” (Daniel 8:25). When we compare this prediction with the historical record of the life and actions of Antiochus Epiphanes IV, we see a striking fulfillment in the hubris of this king. Bible scholar H.W. Hoehner explained that Antiochus Epiphanes IV “assumed the title of Theos Epiphanes meaning ‘the manifest God’” (1976, 1:192-193). Coins that were minted during Epiphanes’ reign add further weight to the fact that he exalted himself to the position of deity. Mahlon H. Smith provides detailed pictures of a silver tetradrachma minted by Epiphanes that has on it “*Basileos Antiochou Theou Epiphaniou Nikephorou*,” which means “of King Antiochus, God Manifest, Victory Bearer” (2008). Smith also presents a  
(cont. on p. 56)



## The Atheistic Naturalist's Self-Contradiction

Jeff Miller, Ph.D.

When thoroughly scrutinized, error always exposes itself through some kind of self-contradiction. Truth alone stands the test of scrutiny. One such example is highlighted when considering a fundamental plank of the atheistic naturalist's position.

The atheist says, "I refuse to consider believing in anything that isn't natural—whose explanation cannot be found in nature. Everything must and can be explained through natural processes." So, according to the atheist, the existence of everything in the Universe must be explainable by natural means—nothing unnatural (e.g., a supernatural Being) can be considered in the equation. Evolutionary geologist Robert Hazen, who received a Ph.D. in Earth Science from Harvard, is a research scientist at the Carnegie Institution of Washington's Geophysical Laboratory and a professor of Earth Science at George Mason University. In his lecture series, *Origins of Life*, Hazen said:

In this lecture series I make a basic **assumption** that life emerged by some kind of **natural process**. I propose that life arose by a sequence of events that are completely consistent with the **natural laws** of chemistry and physics. **In this assumption I am like most other scientists**. I believe in a universe that is ordered by these **natural laws**. Like other scientists, I rely on the power of **observations and experiments** and theoretical reasoning to understand how the cosmos came to be the way it is (2005, emp. added).

The problem is that in holding this position, the naturalist quickly runs into walls of scientific fact that contradict it. The laws of science are formal declarations of what have been proven, time and again through science, to occur **in nature** without exception. The naturalist cannot hold a view that contradicts the laws of nature and not simultaneously contradict himself. But this is precisely the position that the naturalist is in. He must allege an explanation not in keeping with nature for many things we find in the Universe. For example, the naturalist's explanation of the origin of matter and energy (i.e., spontaneous

generation or eternal existence) is unnatural (i.e., in contradiction to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Laws of Thermodynamics; see Miller, 2007). The naturalist must further contradict himself by alleging an unnatural explanation for the origin of life (i.e., abiogenesis, in contradiction to the Law of Biogenesis; see Miller, 2012). And what's more, the naturalist must contradict himself by alleging that various kinds of living creatures can give rise to other kinds of living creatures through macroevolution—a contention which, unlike microevolution, has never been observed to occur in nature (see Thompson, 2002). Abiogenesis, spontaneous energy generation, the eternity of matter, and macroevolution are all **unnatural** suggestions since they have never been observed to occur in nature, and yet they are fundamental to the naturalist's unnatural view. Simply put, the atheistic naturalist's position is self-contradictory.

The worldview that is in keeping with the evidence—that is not self-contradictory—is the Christian faith as described on the pages of the Bible. The naturalist cannot explain the Universe without relying on unnatural means. The creationist has no problem with unnatural explanations, since the Bible clearly states that God—a supernatural Being—created the Universe and life. Truth is never self-contradictory. When scrutinized, it always comes out on top. When a person chooses to fight it, he will inevitably get hurt in the end. "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Psalm 53:1).

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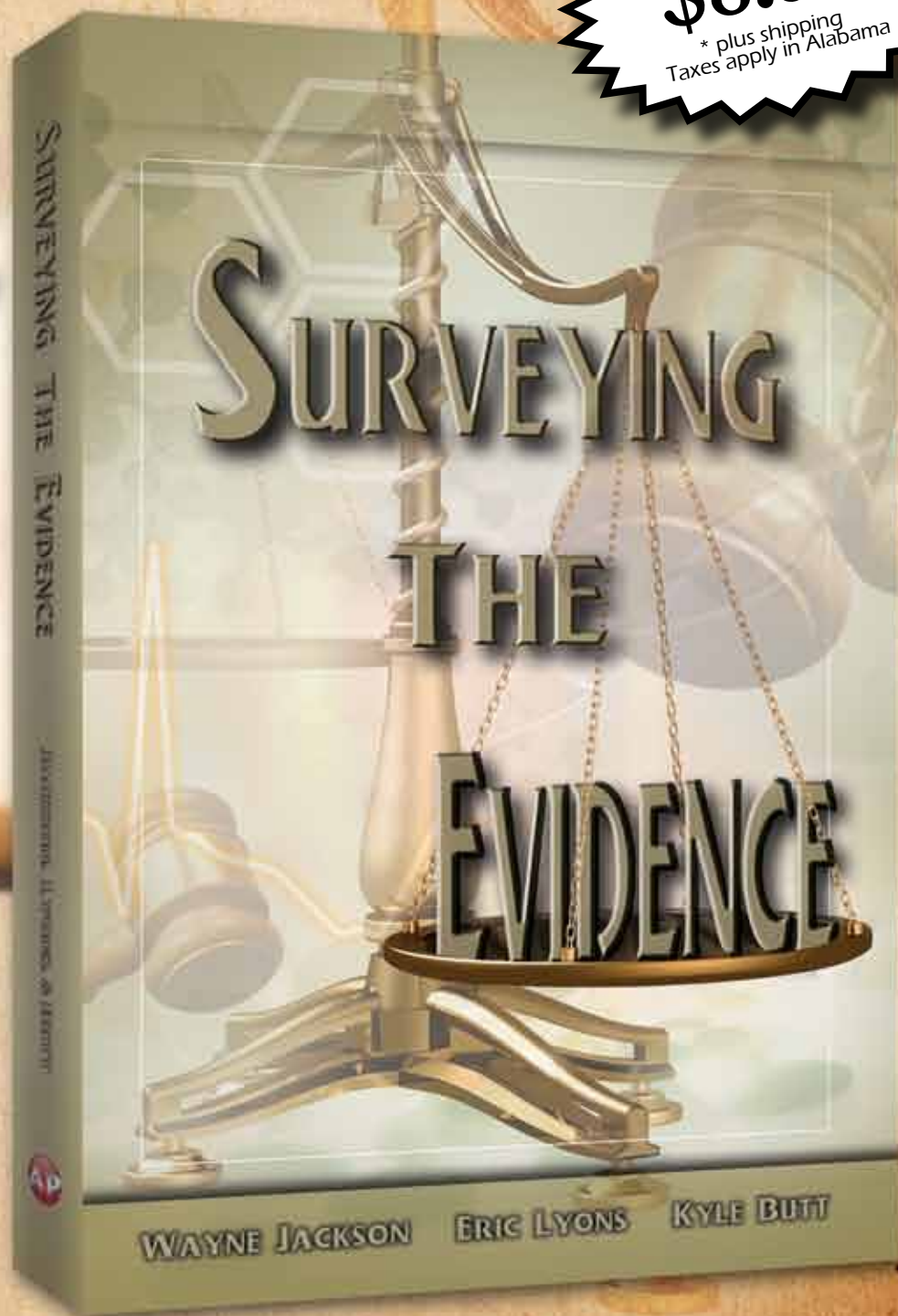


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bronze coin that depicts Antiochus IV with the phrase “God Manifest” on it as well. There can be no doubt that Antiochus Epiphanes IV exalted himself “as high as the Prince of the host,” a fact that adds additional weight to the idea that Antiochus Epiphanes IV is the little horn of Daniel’s vision.

### The Daily Sacrifices Were Taken Away

Daniel’s vision predicted that the little horn that arose from the male goat would grow “exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious land” (Daniel 8:9). The reference to the “Glorious Land” is a reference to Judea and Jerusalem, a fact that is born out by the statement that the little horn would cause the daily sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem to cease. It is a simple matter of history to identify the point in time when the daily sacrifices in the temple were taken away. The book of 1 Maccabees documents that Antiochus IV waged war against Ptolemy, routing his army and killing many (1976, 1:17-19). On the return trip from Egypt, Antiochus IV plundered the temple. Two years later, he sent a general named Mysarch who destroyed many of the towns of Judah and killed a host of the Jews. In addition, he sent letters to Jerusalem “to put a stop to burnt offerings and meal offering and libation in the temple, to violate Sabbaths and festivals.” And in 167 B.C. he desecrated the altar in the temple, which the 1 Maccabees writer refers to as the abomination of desolation (1:44-64).

### “Broken Without Human Means”

When the angel Gabriel explained Daniel’s dream, the heavenly messenger predicted that the wicked king who was portrayed as the little horn would be “broken without human means” (Daniel 8:25). When we compare the death of Antiochus Epiphanes IV with this statement, we can see that it accurately describes his demise. Antiochus did not die in battle, as many ancient kings did, nor was he assassinated by conspirators. In fact, Antiochus did not die at the

hands of any other human. Various historical references relating to his death verify the fact that he died because of a distemper or fever. Josephus stated:

[H]e was confounded, and, by the anxiety he was in, fell into a distemper, which, as it lasted a great while, and as his pains increased upon him, so he at length perceived he should die in a little time; so he called his friends to him, and told them that his distemper was severe upon him, and confessed withal, that this calamity was sent upon him for the miseries he had brought upon the Jewish nation, while he plundered their temple and condemned their God; and when he had said this, he gave up the ghost (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 12:9:1).

Polybius, a Greek historian from the second century B.C., stated that Antiochus “died at Tabae in Persia, smitten with madness, as some people say, owing to certain manifestations of divine displeasure” (1927, 31:9). Appian, a Roman historian from the second century A.D., said that he died of “wasting disease” (n.d., 66). And Diodorus Siculus, who wrote during the first century B.C., recorded that Antiochus Epiphanes IV “was driven mad by certain apparitions and terrors, and finally died of disease” (1947, 31:18a). Both Siculus and Polybius attribute Antiochus’ disease to divine displeasure over his attack on the temple of Artemis, while Josephus attributes it to his actions against the temple of the Jews. But the fact upon which they agree is that Antiochus Epiphanes IV died of a “disease,” or “distemper,” or “madness,” that was not the result of any human means. Thus, his death perfectly coincides with the death of the little horn of Daniel 8 that would be “broken without human means.”

### ENEMIES ACCUSE DANIEL 8 OF BEING HISTORY, NOT PROPHECY

Daniel’s vision and Gabriel’s commentary on it have proven to be so accurate that skeptics are forced to admit its accuracy, but claim that it was written **after** the events transpired—not hundreds of years before. One can

see why skeptics must adopt this tactic. If the vision of Daniel 8 actually was written in approximately 550 B.C., and it accurately predicted events in detail that did not transpire until 164 B.C., then whoever wrote the book must have been aided by divine guidance. Since the atheists, skeptics, and many liberal theologians cannot tolerate such a conclusion, they must find some way to deny the prophecy. Since secular history verifies the prophecy in great detail, to deny that the vision of Daniel 8 documents actual events would be tantamount to intellectual suicide. Thus, the only alternative is to contend that the record of the events in Daniel 8 is a historic record that was penned after the events took place. We will see that such a tactic is misguided and flawed, and cannot be sustained. But the fact that it is used does much to confirm the accuracy of the prophecy. After all, if the prophecy were not accurate, why would any unbeliever be forced to call it history?

Near the beginning of the 5th century A.D., Jerome became a prominent figure among Christians. He penned a commentary on the book of Daniel, in which he mentioned a skeptic by the name of Porphyry,

who wrote his twelfth book against the prophecy of Daniel, denying that it was composed by the person to whom it is ascribed in its title, but rather by some individual living in Judaea at the time of Antiochus who was surnamed Epiphanes. He furthermore alleged that “Daniel” did not foretell the future so much as he related the past.... [B]ecause Porphyry saw that all these things had been fulfilled and could not deny that they had taken place, he overcame this evidence of historical accuracy by taking refuge in this evasion.... For so striking was the reliability of what the prophet foretold, that he could not appear to unbelievers to be a predictor of the future, but rather a narrator of things already past (1958, pp. 15-16).

Modern-day skeptic, Chris Sandoval, was forced to adopt the same line of reasoning, stating: “Actually, the book was



written in Palestine in the mid-second century BC by an author who expected God to set up his everlasting kingdom in his own near future..." (2007). Throughout his work, while claiming (without success) that the author of Daniel made mistakes, he insists that the author had an accurate knowledge of much world history. Sandoval said of the author of Daniel: "We see that he was well-acquainted with the history of the Seleucids and Ptolemies up to a century and half before his time;" and "[s]ince these predictions largely came true until the middle of the war and failed thereafter, we know that the author lived in Seleucid times, not Babylonian times" (2007). Sandoval's statement that Daniel's prophecies "failed" after the war is false, but he concedes that Daniel's predictions "largely came true until the middle of the war." Such reasoning tacitly admits the fact that even the skeptics believe that Daniel's vision accurately detailed many events as they occurred in history.

### WERE DANIEL'S VISIONS PROPHECY OR HISTORY?

Since Daniel's vision coincides perfectly with actual events to such a degree that the skeptic is forced to label it history instead of prophecy, the Christian apologist is left with the task of showing that the book of Daniel was, indeed, written hundreds of years prior to the events it describes. If that can be done conclusively—and it can—then Daniel's prophetic vision in Daniel 8 stands as a fulfilled, predictive prophecy, and an infallible proof of the Bible's inspiration and the existence of God Who inspired the book. Let us explore various reasons why the book of Daniel should be dated to the sixth century B.C.

#### The Primary Reason to Date Daniel in the Second Century is its Accuracy

Skeptics insist that the book must have been written in the second century B.C. due to anachronism in its text and various other discrepancies. None of their allegations has been sustained. Instead,

the astute reader finds that the primary reason the skeptic rejects the early date of Daniel is because of its accuracy. Due to their naturalistic assumptions—that no writer could accurately predict events that occurred 400 years after his writing—skeptics assert a late date for Daniel based on the false assumption that predictive prophecy is impossible.

Sandoval's article provides an excellent example of this assumption. He stated: "Since these predictions largely came true until the middle of the war and failed thereafter, we know that the author lived in Seleucid times, not Babylonian times" (2007). Observe the reasoning behind how he arrives at a date for the book. The information in Daniel is accurate up to the time of the Seleucids, thus Daniel must have been written after those events occurred. [Again, I would note that his accusation that Daniel's information fails after that point is false.]

Notice the circular reasoning involved. The assertion is that Daniel must have been written in the second century solely because of its accuracy. But the assertion fails to account for the possibility of accurate, predictive prophecy. In essence, the skeptic is forced to say that Daniel is accurate, and thus could not have been written before the second century, because no such thing as predictive prophecy exists. Yet, is it not the case that the very point of the discussion is to determine the legitimacy

of predictive prophecy? The skeptic cannot say that Daniel is not predictive prophecy because there is no such thing as predictive prophecy. To date Daniel in the second century because it is accurate is faulty reasoning of the highest order.

#### The Internal Evidence of Authorship

The book of Daniel claims to have been written by an Israelite exile named Daniel. Various verses in Daniel (7:2,15; 8:1,27; 9:2; 12:5) insist that Daniel authored the book. In addition, the book provides specific statements such as, "in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign" (2:1), "in the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar" (8:1), and "in the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus" (9:1), that date the book to the sixth century B.C. In order for the skeptic or liberal theologian to reject these clear statements, he must provide valid reasons why they cannot be true. Such reasons have never been provided. As jurisprudence expert Simon Greenleaf stated: "Every document, apparently ancient, coming from the proper repository or custody, and bearing on its face no evident marks of forgery, the law presumes to be genuine, and devolves on the opposing party the burden of proving it to be otherwise" (1995, p. 16).

#### Daniel in the Dead Sea Scrolls Collection

Another reason to date Daniel in the sixth century B.C. instead of the second

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is its presence in the Dead Sea Scrolls collection. Several partial copies of Daniel were found at Qumran. First, this fact shows that by the time the books were being collected to store at Qumran, the book of Daniel was viewed with such respect that numerous copies were made to store there. As Bruce Waltke stated: “The discovery of manuscripts of Daniel at Qumran dating from the Maccabean period renders it highly improbable that the book was composed during the time of the Maccabees” (1976, 133:321). By the time of the Maccabees, Daniel was already such a respected and revered, sacred book that it had been copied and stored with other ancient texts at Qumran. Second, in his study of a section of Job found at Qumran, a fragment known as 11QtJob, Robert Vasholz suggested that the composition of the fragment “may have originally dated to the late third century or early second century B.C.” (1978, 21:319). He compared this fragment to sections of Daniel and concluded that the data “suggest that Daniel was written before 11QtJob and lead us to believe that the evidence now available from Qumran indicates a pre-second-century date for the Aramaic of Daniel” (p. 320). Not only does the presence of Daniel at Qumran provide evidence of a pre-second-century date, but the Aramaic used in the book supplies additional weight to support an early date.

#### Daniel's Use of the Name Belshazzar

For many years, critics used Daniel's reference to Belshazzar as evidence that the book contained historical errors. They asserted that Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon and Belshazzar was a figment of the author's imagination. Evidence began to accrue, however, in the form of ancient writings and inscriptions, that showed that “for much of the reign of Nabonidus, his eldest son, Belshazzar, acted as coregent” (Waltke, 1976, 133:328). This fact led Waltke to correctly conclude: “It seems clear, then, from a straightforward reading of the narratives of the Book of Daniel that

the author possessed a more accurate knowledge of Neo-Babylonia and early Achaemenid Persian history than any other known historian since the sixth century B.C.” (p. 328). In essence, the name Belshazzar had disappeared from the annals of history from about 450 B.C. until the writing on *The Nabonidus Chronicle* was published in 1882. Thus the author of Daniel could not have been a second century observer because he would have had no way to know of the co-regency of Nabonidus and Belshazzar (Jackson, n.d.).

#### Josephus' Witness to an Early Date for Daniel

Josephus, the first century A.D. historian who penned Jewish history for a Roman audience, adds additional weight to the fact that Daniel was written in the sixth century B.C. and not in the second century. First, in regard to the book of Daniel, Josephus expressed the then-common Jewish belief that Daniel was a prophetic book that belonged among the Scriptures or sacred writings. He concluded that a person who wanted to know certain aspects of prophecy should be “diligent in reading the book of Daniel, which he will find among the sacred writings” (*Antiquities...*, 10:10:4). A few paragraphs later, after relating information taken directly from the book of Daniel, Josephus said, “Let no one blame me for writing down everything of this nature, as I find it in our ancient books” (10:10:6). Notice that Josephus viewed Daniel as both part of the “sacred writings” and as part of the list of “ancient books” about which the entire Jewish community had no doubt of their authenticity.

In addition, in his book *Against Apion*, Josephus explained that the Jewish nation revered 22 books as divinely inspired, Daniel being one of those. Concerning the date of the writing of the books, he said: “[F]rom the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books” (1:8). He went on

to explain that certain Jewish writers had written history books after the time of Artaxerxes, but their writings were not esteemed “of the like authority with the former by our forefathers” (1:8). Thus, Josephus viewed Daniel as sacred Scripture, and noted that no such Scripture had been written after the reign of Artaxerxes, the date of whose reign is established by secular historians as 465 B.C. to 424 B.C. (“Artaxerxes,” 2011). There is, then, no honest way to read Josephus without understanding that he viewed the date of Daniel to be prior to 424 B.C. and, speaking as a representative for the Jewish nation, believed this view was the common one among his people.

Furthermore, when Josephus wrote about the conquest of Alexander the Great (336-324 B.C.), he again mentioned the book of Daniel. He noted that as Alexander was coming into the land of Judea, one of the priests showed him the book of Daniel: “And when the book of Daniel was showed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended” (*Antiquities...*, 11:8:5). He came into Jerusalem, treated the high priest “magnificently,” and offered sacrifices to God in the temple. He also promised to let the Jews “enjoy the laws of their forefathers.” Additionally, after Josephus' discussion of Daniel's prophecy in chapter 8, he stated: “And indeed it so came to pass, that our nation suffered these things under Antiochus Epiphanes, according to Daniel's vision, and what he wrote many years before they came to pass” (*Antiquities...*, 10:11:7).

Were the testimony of Josephus all that history had preserved about the book of Daniel, it would be enough to positively date the book to the sixth century B.C. In order to discredit such powerful testimony, the skeptic or liberal theologian must completely reinvent the way ancient history is viewed. Such attempts show an obvious and ill-advised prejudice against biblical prophecy. The



only reason to dismiss such testimony is if a person is dedicated to the proposition that prophecy is impossible. An honest evaluation of the testimony of Josephus forces the analyst to conclude that Daniel cannot be a second century B.C. document, but must be included in the list of ancient books—sacred Scripture—that was written prior to 424 B.C.

### An Additional Consideration

Of course, it has been impossible to consider at length all the reasons to date the book of Daniel in the sixth century and not the second, but one additional reason merits brief mention. “The precision of the details within the book [of Daniel] relative to the city of Babylon argues that the writer was an eyewitness of that ancient culture” (Jackson, n.d.). Indeed, so accurate are the historical facts and the specific knowledge of the writer of the book that a lengthy article could be written solely documenting the myriad examples of the writer’s intimate, accurate knowledge of the culture and history of the precise period in which the book claims to have been written.

### CONCLUSION

Daniel 8 provides an accurate, detailed description of the historic events that occurred between 550 B.C. and 164 B.C. A straightforward reading of the text indicates that these events were predicted hundreds of years before they actually occurred. If they are accurate predictions, then the book of Daniel stands as irrefutable evidence that (1) God exists, and (2) the book is divinely inspired by God. Of course, the skeptic and unbeliever do not believe in divine inspiration or God’s existence. Due to their preconceived bias against the supernatural, they are forced to concoct ways to try to discredit the prophecies in Daniel. Since the secular historical record so clearly coincides with the book, attempts to gainsay the book as inaccurate fail miserably.

Thus, the skeptic is forced to conjecture that the book was written after the

events took place, instead of before. In this vein, it has been suggested that Daniel was written in the second century B.C., instead of the sixth. The evidence against this assertion, however, is so powerful that to adopt the late date for Daniel lands the skeptic in a morass of contradiction and inconsistency. Gleason Archer, Jr. accurately summed up the force of the evidence for an early date for Daniel when he wrote:

This poses such problems for the committed antisupernaturalist, who can only explain the successful predictions of Daniel as prophecies after the fulfillment, that he is not likely to be swayed by any amount of objective evidences whatever. Nevertheless, such evidence continues to pour in... (1970, 127:297).

In truth, Daniel 8 stands as an insurmountable barrier to naturalism and an atheistic worldview, and provides positive evidence of God’s existence and the inspiration of the Bible.

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## NOTE FROM

## The Editor

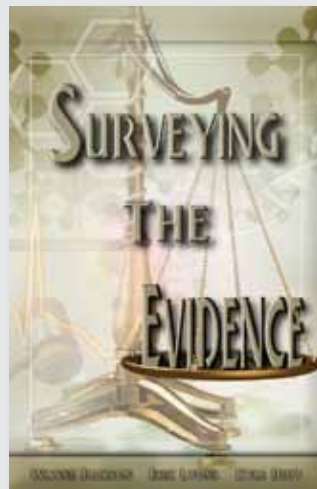


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On another note, please be reminded of the upcoming A.P. Summer Camps—the first is scheduled for June 10-15 and centered on “Defending the Reliability of the Bible.”

**Dave Miller**